

2026 Extraordinary Call for the IRB Barcelona International PhD Fellowships Programme (ref.01/26.3/IRB)

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Section II, article 6, letters c) and q) of the Articles of Association of the *Fundació Institut de Recerca Biomèdica (IRB Barcelona)* (hereafter referred to as IRB Barcelona or the Institute) establish that the Institute will promote activities that address collaboration and knowledge transfer and also launch fellowship calls and subsequent granting of these awards.

Accordingly, this document is to announce a fellowship call included in the IRB Barcelona International PhD Programme. The fellowships are assigned to students enrolled on a PhD programme who perform and defend their PhD theses under the supervision of group leaders at IRB Barcelona.

I. Objective

These Terms and Conditions serve to regulate the award of PhD fellowships for the academic year 2026–2027 or 2027–2028 (if applicable).

II. Fellowship Call

The following will be offered in this call:

- Up to 8 FPI doctoral positions associated with the “Proyectos de Generación de Conocimiento 2025” Call (funded by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación AEI–MICINN).

The FPI positions will be regulated by the MICINN call, following the conditions of this government agency.

All fellowship awardees will be contracted by IRB Barcelona. Fellowships will be renewable on a yearly basis and up to 4 years from the date of signature of the employment contract by the awardee, provided that he/she complies with all the requirements of point X of this call.

The awardee’s supervisor will be the group leader at IRB Barcelona previously assigned and agreed with the awardee before the signature of the fellowship. This group leader will oversee that the duties assigned to the awardee are fulfilled and will notify IRB

Barcelona's Academic Office and the Chair of the Academic Advisory Committee of any incident, alterations in the fulfilment of the allocated duties, or other pertinent circumstances so that corrective measures can be applied and/or proceedings can be started to withdraw the fellowship.

III. Requirements and Selection Criteria

IRB Barcelona will recruit prospective doctoral candidates of any nationality, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation or age to undertake a PhD in biomedicine.

Eligibility:

1. The programme is aimed at students who have completed one of the following options before July 2027:

- a) Studies that lead to an official Spanish (or from another country of the European Higher Education Area) university degree in Biology, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Pharmacy, Physics, Medicine or related fields and that have 300 credits (ECTS), of which at least 60 must correspond to master level.
- b) A degree in a non-Spanish university not adapted to the European Higher Education Area and that gives access to doctoral studies in Biology, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Pharmacy, Physics, Medicine or related fields in Spain.

2. Candidates are selected exclusively on merit, on the basis of their curricula. The academic grades and curriculum vitae of each applicant are evaluated, as well as recommendation letters and a motivation letter. No selection criteria for positive or negative discrimination are applied.

Applicants should indicate the Research Group to which they wish to apply. Details of the projects available are provided in Annex 1.

IV. Application Procedure

1. Applications can be submitted online at <https://11nq.com/mfl9k5v>. The application deadline is 15:00 CET on 28 October 2026.

The tentative calendar for this call is as follows:

Call opening: 15 September 2026

Deadline for applications: 28 October 2026, 15:00 CET

Deadline for referee submissions: 30 October 2026, 15:00 CET

Online Interviews: TBD November 2026

Notification to candidates: 4 December 2026 (TBC)

Start date of fellowships (depending on the official announcement by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación (AEI-MICINN): 1 January – 1 September 2027

If the application deadline is extended, the updated information will be available on the IRB Barcelona's website.

2. For more information, applicants can consult IRB Barcelona's webpage or contact IRB Barcelona's Academic Office at academicoffice@irbbarcelona.org.

V. Applications

Applicants should apply through the Recruitment Portal, together with the following documents:

1. Curriculum vitae specifying education and experience, including career breaks, and supported by pertinent documents.
2. A motivation letter (maximum 2 pages) highlighting their research experience and academic achievements and explaining why they are interested in IRB Barcelona and in a particular research group.
3. A scanned copy of their certified Academic Record. These documents must show the grades. If the certified academic records are not in Spanish, Catalan or English, applicants should also attach a translation in one of the above-mentioned languages.
4. Any additional files considered relevant to the application
5. Two recommendation letters from university lecturers or scientists with whom they have studied or worked. Candidates are responsible for ensuring that referees submit these letters. Applications not supported by these letters will not be eligible. If the applicant has previously worked with a researcher at IRB Barcelona, any letter of reference from said person cannot be included as one of the two reference letters requested. However, it can be sent to provide additional support for the application.

Applicants will be asked to send the documents in English. Please note that all the documents provided should be in PDF format.

VI. Selection

Evaluation criteria:

Criteria 1. Academic and/or scientific-technical career path of the candidate (up to 50 points).

Sub-criteria

1. a) Scientific-technical contributions (up to 45 points). The academic record and other curricular merits of the candidate will be assessed, as well as their suitability for the tasks to be carried out based on training and professional experience.

1. b) Mobility and internationalisation (up to 5 points). Short stays in national and international institutions, universities, and industry will be assessed based on the prestige of the hosting entity and the activities conducted during the stay. Additionally, the impact of the research stays on the candidate's career will also be considered.

Criteria 2. Adequacy of the candidate to the research activities to be carried out (up to 50 points).

The adequacy of the candidates for the program, project or research activities to be carried out will be assessed based on their previous training and experience. For that purpose, consideration shall be given to the added value that carrying out the project will represent for their research career, as well as the value contributed to the institution and the host research group.

Evaluation and Selection Process

The evaluation and selection of the candidates will be performed by the project supervisor, supported by the IRB Academic Office, and following the procedure below:

1. Submitted applications will be checked for eligibility by the Academic Office, and those not fulfilling all the criteria will be rejected. It will not be possible to modify the application or to add missing documentation after the call deadline.
2. The selection will be based on the evaluation criteria described in Section "Eligibility".
3. At the late stages of the selection process, short-listed candidates will be contacted for a personal interview.
4. All applicants will be notified of the final selection decision when the selection process has been completed and the candidate has been selected and accepted. Candidates may submit allegations they deem to be appropriate, within 10 days of the date of the publication.

Successful candidates will be requested to inform IRB Academic Office (academicoffice@irbbarcelona.org) whether they accept or decline the offer within five business days of being notified. If the applicant does not respond during this time, the offer will be considered declined.

On 9 December 2014, IRB Barcelona was awarded the "HR Excellence in Research" logo. This recognition reflects the commitment of the Institute to continuously improving its human resources policies in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. More information about our OTM-R (Open, Transparent, Merit-based Recruitment) policy can be found at the following [link](#).

VII. Documentation

Each candidate selected during the interviews must sign the following documents to complete the selection procedure.

1. A sworn statement expressing intention to enroll in a university doctoral programme.
2. A sworn statement stating that he or she does not receive any other funding or fellowship grant.

Non-compliance with points 1 and 2 will automatically lead to withdrawal of the fellowship.

VIII. Communication of Fellowship Award

The Head of Human Resources and Academic Affairs department will officially inform successful candidates of the fellowship award.

IX. Rights of Awardees

1. Awardees will have the following general rights:
 - a) To be provided with the necessary assistance to perform their studies and research activities.
 - b) To become a member of the research programme in which they will be undertaking PhD studies.
 - c) To participate in bodies governing and representing the student community.
 - d) To participate in complementary calls for funding to attend scientific congresses or to spend training periods in other centres upon approval of their supervisors and the director of IRB Barcelona.
 - e) To have their intellectual and industrial property rights regulated in the employment contract with IRB Barcelona.
2. Awardees will have employment and Social Security rights derived from the employment contract with IRB Barcelona.
3. Awardees will be able to exercise intellectual property rights derived from their training activity in accordance with their contribution, as established in the Intellectual Property Law, Royal Decree 1/1996, 12 April. These rights will be independent, compatible, and accumulable with other rights that may arise from the research developed, without negatively affecting the rights of the joint effort when the awardees participate in or are associated with a joint research project.
4. Regarding possible industrial property rights of the awardees, these will be regulated by Law 24/2015, of July 24, 2015, on Patents, and Royal Decree 55/2002, of January 18, 2002, governing the exploitation and license of rights on discoveries made in public research organisations.

Said rights will not be linked to salary.

X. Responsibilities of Awardees

1. To fulfil the terms and conditions established in this call.
2. To enrol in a university doctoral programme.
3. To perform their research activity under the supervision of a group leader at IRB Barcelona for the duration of the fellowship. In addition, they must perform the activities foreseen in the research training and specialisation programmes of the Institute, as well as satisfactorily fulfil the objectives of the training programme.
4. To comply with the internal regulations of IRB Barcelona, particularly regarding working conditions and the prevention of occupational risks.
5. To prepare a report each year informing on the scientific progress of their theses. Moreover, they will present this report to their Thesis Advisory Committee, designated by the Institute.
6. To request approval from the group leader supervising their activity prior to the submission for publication or disclosure of any abstracts and/or publications based on research carried out at IRB Barcelona.
7. To undertake the duties that correspond to them as a result of being contracted by IRB Barcelona, as well as those associated with inclusion in the Social Security System.
8. To defend their theses and obtain the respective PhD degree by the end of the fourth year after the start of the fellowship. In exceptional cases, an extension of one year may be given for the defence of the thesis.

XI. Termination of Fellowships

The fellowship will be revoked if the awardee has withheld or falsified information. The fellowship will also be revoked if the awardee does not fulfil the responsibilities described in point X.

XII. Incompatibility

Awardees will be devoted exclusively to the research or technical training and specialisation activities defined in this call. The fellowships included in this call are not compatible with any other type of grant or fellowship from other public or private organisations.

XIII. Legal Regime

Awardees will be subjected to the legal regime applicable to PhD fellowships according to the law in force at the time of drawing up the contract.

XIV. Data Protection

In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation), Organic Law 3/2018 of December 5, and other applicable regulations governing personal data protection, any personal data provided by applicants will be incorporated into the Academic file of IRB Barcelona, for which the Institute is the data controller. The purpose of keeping such data is to manage the relationship of the Institute with applicants. Applicants may exercise the rights of access, rectification deletion, opposition, transfer and expiry, as well as limitation in data processing of said information by contacting the Institute at the following e-mail address: dataprotection@irbbarcelona.org, or by writing to the following postal address: C/ Baldiri Reixac, 10, 08028, Barcelona.

XV. Dissemination

Any information regarding this fellowship call will be placed on the announcement board on IRB Barcelona's website.

XVI. Clarification

The Director of IRB Barcelona or a designated representative will be responsible for clarifying queries regarding these terms and conditions.

Barcelona, 15 September 2026



Maribel Labrid
Head of Human Resources and Academic Affairs

ANNEX 1. Research projects

IRB Barcelona research group	Group Leader	Research Cluster	Description of the research project
Signalling and Cell Cycle Laboratory	Angel R. Nebreda	Cancer Science	This project will investigate the molecular mechanisms that determine cancer cell dependency on the protein kinase p38 α , with a particular focus on triple-negative breast cancer. Building on candidate genes and pathways identified through genetic screens and gene expression analyses, the project will combine molecular, cellular and functional approaches to uncover how p38 α supports cancer cell fitness and shapes responses to therapy. The ultimate goal is to identify vulnerabilities that could be exploited for the development of improved therapeutic strategies.
Development and Growth Control Laboratory	Marco Milán	Mechanisms of Disease	Impact of aneuploidy on development Despite its deleterious effects, aneuploidy (an unbalanced number of chromosomes) has been recently shown to be highly prevalent in human embryos. Aneuploid cells are subsequently depleted from embryonic germ layers to give rise to healthy births. Cell competition, a homeostatic process that eliminates viable but less fit cells by comparing their fitness to neighboring cells, has emerged as a highly compelling mechanism through which aneuploid cells might be recognized and removed in different contexts. This PhD project aims at using <i>Drosophila</i> as an <i>in vivo</i> model system to address whether this is the case, and to identify the underlying molecular players.
Biomedical Genomics	Núria López-Bigas	Computational, Chemical and Structural Biology	The somatic evolution of normal human tissues The evolution of human somatic tissues is driven by the interplay between the processes that generate neutral mutations and the selective constraints that provide advantages to some mutant cells over others. We are currently studying how exogenous factors that constitute known cancer risk factors influence the clonal landscape of normal tissues by shaping mutagenesis and/or selection. In this project, the PhD student will identify somatic mutations in several tissues from the same donors. Then, they will detect the genes under positive selection in each of these tissues, to discern whether systemic exposures provide an advantage to different types of cells with mutations affecting the same or different genes. Moreover, they will study the effect of different exposures on different tissues, to understand how they affect the risk of different types of cancer.
Growth Control and Cancer Metastasis	Roger Gomis	Cancer Science	We propose to elucidate drug-tolerant persister BCa cells, which develop following treatment, can persist in the body in a latent state, and can metastasize. We believe that there is an extensive phenotypic heterogeneity and plasticity present in BCa cells/tissues prior to treatment, which influences chemotherapy resistance and promotes resistant cancer cell development. Research has been hindered by their heterogeneity and the technical difficulties presented by the extremely low number of cells necessary for disease progression and by the requirement of an extra-cellular environment for drug resistant plasticity. We now propose to gain previously unappreciated

			understanding at the genetic, epigenetic, biochemical, and cellular levels of the chromatin and transcriptional regulatory mechanisms that establish drug resistant latent state and subsequent metastasis progression, and then to exploit this information for therapy.
Stem Cells and Cancer	Salvador Aznar Benitah	Aging and Metabolism	The project aims to study the systemic metabolic changes occurring as a consequence of metastasis that trigger cancer-associated cachexia. Specifically, we will investigate the alterations in cholesterol, fatty acid, and amino acid receptor metabolism within the systemic communication between metastatic lesions and key metabolic organs (liver, adipose tissue, and skeletal muscle).
Innate Immune Biology	Stefanie Wculek	Aging and Metabolism	Uncovering the relevance of neutrophil metabolism in health and obesity Neutrophils are the most abundant circulating leukocyte in humans and patrol the bloodstream for invading pathogens. They are bone-marrow derived myeloid cells, which are released into the bloodstream from where they are recruited to inflammatory sites. However, as part of normal physiology, neutrophils infiltrate tissues such as the lung and skin where they acquire an organ-specific gene expression pattern. Moreover, recent evidence shows that neutrophils affect organ health and non-infectious diseases, such as obesity-related pathologies. This project will investigate how neutrophils adapt to different microenvironments in homeostasis and obesity by engaging different metabolic pathways, as the metabolic state of a cell is intrinsically tied to its function. Successful candidates are expected to closely collaborate with a multidisciplinary research team, tapping into the expertise of fellow researchers and external collaborators. They should learn how to analyze and interpret transcriptomic, proteomic, epigenetic and metabolomic datasets (in collaboration with our bioinformatics unit) as well as apply advanced approaches and cutting-edge techniques for analysis of neutrophils function, mouse models of diseases, primary tissue culture and human samples; including multicolor flow cytometry and cell sorting, several OMIC analyses, multiplex microscopy and spatial analyses of tissues, epigenetic analyses and various metabolic assays. We provide a stimulating, interactive, challenging and equal opportunity team-working environment in a modern research institute, with innovative research infrastructures and core facilities. Moreover, we offer training in hard and soft skills with world-class support at the group- and institute-level to maximize professional career development.
Comparative Genomics	Toni Gabaldón	Computational, Chemical and Structural Biology	The comparative genomics group (www.cgenomics.org) is seeking motivated candidates to perform a PhD in the exciting area of emerging fungal human pathogens. The recruited PhD candidate will develop an interdisciplinary thesis within the project, aimed at understanding the evolutionary and molecular mechanisms that enable emerging <i>Candida</i> pathogens to colonize human-associated niches, acquire virulence-related traits, and evolve antifungal resistance. The thesis will be adapted to the candidate's background and may follow a computational, experimental, or hybrid direction. Computational work may involve comparative genomics, population genomics, transcriptomics, genotype–phenotype associations, and integration of public and newly generated datasets. Experimental work may include phenotypic characterization of clinical and environmental isolates, antifungal susceptibility testing, stress-response assays, adhesion and biofilm assays, in vitro infection models, experimental evolution, and functional validation of candidate genes or variants. In all cases, the candidate will work in close interaction with computational and experimental members

			of the group, with the goal of linking genomic variation to clinically and biologically relevant phenotypes in emerging <i>Candida</i> pathogens.
Laboratory of Molecular Biophysics	Xavier Salvatella	Mechanisms of Disease	In the Laboratory of Molecular Biophysics at IRB Barcelona, we study the role that intrinsically disordered regions play in the biological activity of multi-domain proteins, with a particular focus on how mutations in these regions are associated with disease and how they can be targeted with small molecules for therapeutic intervention. We are looking to appoint a PhD student to investigate how the intrinsically disordered regions of nuclear proteins influence their efficiency of translocation to the nucleus. The project will involve biophysical experiments with purified proteins, cell-based assays, and molecular simulations, the latter likely carried out in collaboration. The ideal candidate has a strong interest in molecular biophysics, is capable of working independently, and is willing to actively collaborate with other members of the team.

